IMPROVING STUDENT LEARNING AT SCALE: TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TOOL

# HOW SHOULD THIS TOOL BE USED

1. **Understand the Topline Objectives.** The tool is organized by five Topline Objectives from the ISLS Topline Objectives Self-Assessment (Vision, Policy Alignment, System Resources, Communication, and Performance Management), with more specific tasks associated with each component area (Column I), and guiding questions (Column II).
2. **Self-Assess.** As a group, discuss the extent to which your state has made progress on each of the tasks. Using the guiding questions (Column II), decide how the group should describe the status of the task (Column III). Can it be most accurately described as “Not Yet” (e.g., this task is not on anyone’s agenda or list of priorities); “Emerging”; (e.g., there’s evidence that some ISLS leaders have become more aware of or learned more about the importance of this task); “Progressing” (e.g., this task is on an ISLS leader’s agenda and significant action has been taken); or “Advanced” (e.g., the state has invested significant time and resources to this task and has achieved major results)? Describe evidence that supports the group’s assessment (Column IV).
3. **Analyze Tasks: Impact and Effort.** As a group, discuss what kind of impact completing the task is likely to have and what it would take to complete the task.
   1. How much impact on instruction and/or student outcomes will completing this task have? (Column V)
   2. How much effort (e.g., funding, political support, research, staff/organizational capacity, communications, technology, research and development) is needed to complete the task? (Column VI)
4. **Prioritize.** Based partly on the group’s answers in Column III, V, and VI, and other information, decide the level of priority the task should have in the state’s overall CCSS implementation plan (Column VII). For example, tasks that are likely to have a high impact but require low level of effort may be good candidates for high priority items. The state team may also consider other factors that may influence decisions about priorities. For example, are there certain tasks that are more likely to be acted upon because:
   1. There’s a sense of urgency and consensus around a task because it addresses a long-standing or growing problem.
   2. The tasks align well with rising political support for related issues.
   3. The tasks align well with existing related policy initiative, especially those that have significant resources (e.g., developing/implementing new assessments, reforming professional development strategies).
5. **Take a Step Back.** Review the priority levels for each task to make sure that when examined across the tasks or the five Topline Goals, the priority levels still make sense. Do the high (or low) priority tasks seem to be related to some Topline Objectives and not others? If so, does the overall prioritization reflect what the state needs to work on at this moment? Or should the group re-prioritize certain tasks to achieve more balance among the Topline Objectives?
6. **Develop an Action Plan.** Using the priorities as a guide, integrate the tasks into an action plan with specific next steps, timelines, and major leaders and stakeholders to engage.

VISION: **Articulation of the guiding principles that ground the state’s education reform agenda, plus a statement of goals including results for students**

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| 1. Component/task | 1. Guiding questions | 1. Status   (not yet emerging, progressing, advanced) | IV. Notes  (e.g., progress made, ideas for next steps) | V. Impact  (high, medium, low) | VI. Effort (high, medium, low) | VII. Priority (high, medium, low) |
| Coalition-Building: Build coalitions of stakeholders who can share the vision with the broader community and provide political cover for the ISLS leaders and the CCSS | * To what extent is the vision agreed upon by stakeholders? * To what extent is stakeholder agreement and commitment to the vision consistent throughout the state? * How will state leaders ensure stakeholders understand why the state is implementing CCSS and the expected changes? * To what extent are groups outside of education (e.g., advocacy, business, civil rights) promoting the CCSS within the community? |  |  |  |  |  |

POLICY ALIGNMENT: C**reation or adaptation of policies and systems that directly support implementation of CCSS in an aligned way**

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| Teacher and Principal Preparation: Incorporate CCSS into preparation programs to ensure future teachers and principals are ready to base instruction on the CCSS when they enter the profession | * To what extent have teacher and principal preparation programs taken steps to align content and pedagogy with CCSS? * How has program approval of teacher preparation providers changed to reflect new expectations? * How will the state evaluate effectiveness of teacher preparation programs with respect to knowledge of and ability to teach CCSS? * How has the state aligned licensure and certification with CCSS? |  |  |  |  |  |
| Teacher and Principal Support: Help teachers and principals use CCSS to improve effectiveness | * What is the state role in ensuring districts have aligned professional development to CCSS? * How will the state measure the effectiveness of professional development to change instructional practice? * How will the state use aggregate teacher evaluation results and related data to inform large-scale teacher professional development? |  |  |  |  |  |
| Accountability: Establish a process and timeline for incorporating CCSS-aligned assessments into the accountability system | * What is the transition plan for using CCSS-aligned assessments in high-stakes student promotion and/or graduation decisions? * What is the transition plan for incorporating CCSS-aligned assessments into teacher and principal evaluations? * What is the process for transitioning to the new accountability plan in the state’s ESEA Flexibility waiver? (where applicable) * How will the state communicate these changes? * How will the state support students who do not meet college and career ready performance on the CCSS-aligned assessments? * To what extent are the calculation and reporting of accountability metrics transparent? |  |  |  |  |  |
| Assessments: Create a transition plan and timeline to move from current state assessments to CCSS-aligned assessments | * What process is in place to decide which CCSS-aligned assessments the state will use? * When will the state start administering CCSS-aligned assessments? * Which assessments will the CCSS-aligned assessments replace? * How will state leaders communicate this change, including an expected drop in scores, to the public? * What is the budget for transitioning to CCSS-aligned assessments? |  |  |  |  |  |
| K12 and Higher Education Alignment: Address how the CCSS will affect the transition between K12 and postsecondary education | * What process is in place to obtain statewide agreement on the use of CCSS-aligned assessments for placement decisions at public institutions? * What is the state role in facilitating conversations between K12 teachers and higher education faculty to align expectations for student work in entry level college courses? * To what extent will it be necessary to redesign remedial and/or create bridge courses to align with the CCSS? |  |  |  |  |  |
| ECE and K12 Alignment: Address how the CCSS will affect the transition between ECE and K12 education | * What is the state role in facilitating conversations between ECE and K12 teachers to align expectations for student work in early elementary school? * To what extent are ECE standards and CCSS aligned, representing a continuous learning trajectory from birth through 3rd grade? * How is the state increasing the rigor of ECE teacher certification and program accreditation policies (e.g., coursework and requirements) aligned with the CCSS? |  |  |  |  |  |

SYSTETM RESOURCES: **Development of tools, routines, systems, and infrastructure to support CCSS implementation system wide**

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| Finances: Identify ways to allocate and reallocate resources, including existing state and federal funding streams, to support the transition to and implementation of the CCSS | To what extent will funding be allocated/reallocated to cover future costs associated with implementation?   * How will the state encourage sharing of resources among districts, and/or work with other states to develop and/or purchase materials? |  |  |  |  |  |
| Capacity: Build capacity throughout the education system to implement the CCSS effectively and efficiently | * How has the state assessed the capacity, organizational structure, budget, and staffing of SEA, districts, regional service entities, and institutions of higher education to support CCSS implementation? * To what extent has the state developed a plan to address gaps in capacity, such as contracting with outside vendors? |  |  |  |  |  |
| Technology: Develop a plan to assess and address technology and infrastructure needs for a smooth transition to computer-based assessments and digital learning | * To what extent is district infrastructure (e.g., physical accommodations, network capacity, devices, and software licenses) prepared to administer CCSS-aligned assessments and increase digital learning opportunities? * What is the process, timeline, and budget for addressing technology/infrastructure gaps? |  |  |  |  |  |

COMMUNICATION: **Development of a communications plan to coordinate messaging, build knowledge of CCSS, and keep all stakeholders apprised of upcoming changes**

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| Internal: Ensure a consistent message among leaders, across agencies and systems (e.g., ISLS leadership team, policymakers, agency and organization employees) | * What is the plan for continuing internal conversations about timeline and implications of implementation? * What is the plan for ensuring spokesmen for system leaders are prepared to accurately speak about the CCSS? * How is the state gauging the effectiveness of its internal communication strategies? |  |  |  |  |  |
| External: Create a communications strategy that engages multiple stakeholders (e.g., students, parents, business leaders, community organizations, unions, PTA, reform and advocacy organizations, business groups, chamber of commerce, state associations) | * What is the plan for regular communication—broken out by audience—about the timeline and implications of implementation? * How will state leaders gauge the effectiveness of communications efforts? * How is the state gauging the effectiveness of its external communication strategies? |  |  |  |  |  |

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT: **Coordination of** **routines around monitoring**

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| Plan and Timeline: Establish a clear and comprehensive plan and timeline that includes key milestones for implementation and alignment of activities across other domains | * To what extent does the work of each leader of the ISLS team contribute to meeting the goals of the collective vision? * To what extent does the plan clearly designate responsibilities to individuals/organizations to carry out implementation activities? How aware are individuals/organizations of those responsibilities? * Who will be responsible for making sure all implementation activities are completed in accordance with the timeline? * What routines are in place to hold individuals/organizations accountable for delivering on their identified activities? * How does the plan incorporate implications for higher education, SBOE, and legislators? * How will the state sustain implementation through education leadership transitions? |  |  |  |  |  |
| Monitoring: Develop a system to oversee implementation activities and ensure commitment to established vision and progress towards goals | * How will the state handle concerns raised by the public about implementation? * What is the plan for problem solving when work is off track? |  |  |  |  |  |